

BUFORA

THE BRITISH UFO RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR UFO INVESTIGATORS 1997

THE 1997 CODE OF PRACTICE

This code of practice is an updated version of the 1982 document with some minor changes that reflect the changes within BUFORA and British UFOlogy. It is a testament to the strength of the original Code of Practice that so little has needed to be changed within the intervening 15 years. This new version is written specifically for the British UFO Research Association, whose investigators are answerable to the BUFORA NIC rather than a higher body. The items and structure within the Code are essentially unchanged from the 1982 version, with a new numbering system to facilitate the easier location of relevant paragraphs. There is also a new paragraph (6.12) which reflects BUFORA's continuing moratorium on the use of regression hypnosis as an investigative tool. We would remind the reader of the grave doubts regarding the validity of regression hypnosis and related techniques as investigative tools and also the concerns for the welfare of the witnesses who undergo this technique. As Jenny Randles points out below in the original 1982 preface, "Ufologists have not had a good record for co-operation" and the last 15 years have seen much of the same. However, with our continued insistence on the usage of this Code of Practice, BUFORA intends to lead the way towards the highest standards of UFO investigation and reporting.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ORIGINAL 1982 VERSION OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE

Over the years UFO investigators have given some consideration to the methods of their occupation and some groups have published "Investigators Handbooks" (BUFORA, for example). However, little emphasis has been placed on the practice and conduct of an investigator during an investigation. This despite the obvious importance of such matters. Do not forget that we are dealing with a very emotive subject, one which is frequently misrepresented to the public, and often we are a party to this misrepresentation. Witnesses whom we confront may have undergone harrowing physical and psychological traumas as a result of their experience. In this sense we have a role to play which stretches far beyond the investigation of a witness's story.

Once these points were accepted, the need to do something about them was clear. Ufologists have not had a good record for co-operation and much of our internal strife has been counterproductive. It has also worked against the interests of the person we should consider most - the witness. However, early in 1981, various groups of investigators met to discuss future co-operation, the first positive result was the creation of a working party to plan what was variously termed a "code of ethics" or "code of conduct", which has now emerged as a "Code of Practice". This was formulated at meetings in Nottingham, London, Swindon and Bristol between March 1981 and February 1982. The final draft was then vetted by a solicitor before presentation to Ufologists and the world at large.

This code is a triumph of co-operation and shows what can be achieved by concerted effort, but as it stands, it merely sets out principles which ideally should be followed during an investigation. Unless followed by investigators it will mean nothing. Consequently, investigators must always bear it in mind when investigating UFO phenomena.

The code was drafted by the following organisations: The British UFO Research Association (BUFORA), the UFO Investigators Network (UFOIN), the Northern UFO Network (NUFON), the Nottingham UFO Investigation Society (NUFOIS), the Manchester UFO Research Association (MUFORA), the Swindon Centre for UFO Research and Investigation (SCUFORI) and PROBE Research Group, Bristol. Contact UK and the British UFO Society (BUFOS) also participated in some stages of the discussions. This code is now offered to the whole UFO community at home and abroad for their consideration and, hopefully, adoption.

The principal groups involved in the formulation of the Code have joined together to create a supervisory body for Britain. Not only have they resolved that members who investigate on their behalf MUST sign an undertaking to follow the code, but they are willing to inform the public of this. Thus the public are invited to make specific complaints regarding the abuse of this code (though hopefully such complaints will be few and far between) to the Supervisory Body, consisting of representatives of the participating groups. It will be their

decision as to what action should be taken against the investigator or group concerned if they are found to be in breach of the code of practice.

In conclusion I would like to thank all those who contributed so much of their time and effort in devising this code, most of all I would like to mention Geoff Bird of PROBE, who suggested it to me.

“Great trees can from little acorns grow”.

Jenny Randles, April 1982.

The Code of Practice for UFO Investigators

Introduction.

- A. The Code is intended to regulate the investigation of UFO phenomena by groups, organisations and by lone investigators.
- B. This Code of Practice is based on proposals discussed by representatives of leading national and local UFO organisations on the 28th March 1981, 25th April 1981, 13th June 1981 and 14th November 1981.
- C. UFO groups, organisations and lone investigators are equally invited to subscribe to the Code of Practice.
- D. Investigators who are members of, or acting under the auspices of, a UFO group or organisation which subscribes to the Code of Practice must themselves subscribe to the Code.
- E. A supervisory body, with its members drawn from several leading UFO organisations, will administer the Code of Practice.
- F. In the case of members, investigators and researchers for BUFORA, the role of that supervisory body shall be taken by the National Investigations Committee of the British UFO Research Association.

Definitions.

1. Preamble.

Except where specifically stated, words shall have the commonly accepted meaning, all cases of doubt to be resolved by reference to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary.

- 1 (a) *Investigator* includes both lone investigators and UFO organisations.
- 1 (b) Reference to the singular includes the plural, and vice versa.

2. Directive Verbs.

- 2 (a) *Must* indicates mandatory action on the part of the investigator.
- 2 (b) *Shall* or *should* indicates strongly recommended (but discretionary) action by the investigator.
- 2 (c) *Desirable* indicates preferable action by the investigator.

3. Reports.

- 3 (a) *Original* report is the report made and filed by the investigator and may contain *confidential* material.

3 (b) *Edited* report cleared for general distribution and publication, may have been edited or rewritten and *must not* contain any *confidential* material.

4. Classification.

4 (a) *Confidential* information shall mean information not to be disclosed generally.

5. Publication.

5 (a) Publication includes UFO (and other) periodicals, newspapers, circulars, news media, hard cover and soft cover books, and electronic media (e-mail, web sites, etc.)

Code of Practice.

This code of practice consists of three sections:

Responsibility to the witness;

Responsibility to the public; and

Responsibility to UFOlogy.

6. Responsibility to the Witness.

6.1 The identity of the witness to a UFO event is *confidential* and *must not* be disclosed unless written consent is obtained from the witness to release such information. (Section 8.4 refers.) Confidential material includes the name of the witness, home address or place of work, telephone numbers, or other data that may allow the identity of the witness to be ascertained.

6.2 The witness *must* be advised of the consequences which may arise if the information specified in section 6.1 is released.

6.3 Insofar as is practical, all interviews shall be by prior appointment.

6.4 It is desirable that all interviews shall be conducted by two investigators, and in the event of the witness being a woman or minor (under 16 years of age) that one of the investigators is female.

6.5 All requests by the witness (or, in the case of a minor, a parent or other responsible person) for a third party to be present during an interview *must* be honoured.

6.6 If the witness categorically refuses to co-operate in any way, or to meet another investigator, he or she *must not* be approached further, the option for further contact resting with the witness.

6.7 An investigator *must not* enter or attempt to enter any private property without the permission of the owner, tenant (or occupier) or authorised agent.

6.8 Any damage to property caused by an investigator during the course of an investigation (for which the investigator admits liability) shall be made good by that investigator.

6.9 Specialised techniques, or equipment *must not* be used during the interviewing of a witness other than by the written consent of the witness and the use of any such aid or aids shall be restricted to interviews conducted by fully qualified practitioners.

See paragraph 6.12 for the use of regression hypnosis.

6.10 The witness is entitled to be informed of the conclusions reached if he or she so requests.

6.11 Due consideration should always be given to the health and welfare of the witness.

6.12 Note regarding the usage of regression hypnosis and related techniques.

The BUFORA NIC has an ongoing moratorium on the use of regressive hypnosis (or any associated techniques) during a case investigation. This moratorium has been in place since 1988 and continues with the unanimous support of the NIC. Should the witness or a third party insist they wish to undergo regressive hypnosis, the investigator should ensure that they point out the major problems with this method, particularly its unreliability and possible distortion in an understanding of their experience as it represents a “truth” as understood by the witness rather than an “objective truth” about the event. It should also be pointed out that hypnosis may accentuate any problems, psychological or otherwise which have emerged from their experience. However, should it be decided by the witness and other concerned parties that such action may be beneficial to the witness as a therapeutic tool, then the investigator may recommend a qualified practitioner or contact one of BUFORA’s Psychological Consultants for their professional support. It should also be pointed out to the witness that they must follow this route independently of BUFORA’s investigation.

BUFORA investigators who may belong to other groups will be expected to adhere to this moratorium within investigative procedures in their other groups AT ALL TIMES. Should they decide to use hypnosis during an investigation within another group, this will be in direct opposition to the BUFORA NIC moratorium on hypnosis or related techniques and therefore would make their position within the BUFORA NIC no longer tenable.

7. Responsibility to the public.

7.1 All investigators must so far as is practicable co-operate fully with police and any other official body, particularly in circumstances which may affect national security. (Section 8.4 refers)

7.2 If, during any investigation, a situation is encountered which is, or is liable to become, dangerous to the general public, or result in damage to property, the investigator *must* without delay notify the police or other responsible body and take all reasonable steps to protect public and property.

7.3 No information gained during an interview shall be made available prematurely to the news media.

7.4 The investigator shall not issue unsupported statements to the news media concerning any case.

7.5 Investigators are reminded that they have no special privilege and may be required to disclose confidential information to a court of law.

8. Responsibility to UFOlogy.

8.1 The free flow of information shall not be restricted for personal gain; where possible the investigator shall make data available promptly to accredited investigators, with due credit being given to the source of that information in return.

8.2 All interviews regarding cases of high strangeness shall be recorded on audio tape, video tape or other recording device unless the use of a recorder is objected to by the witness (or other responsible person in the case of a minor).

8.3 All reports should indicate the persons present, and their status, during interviews.

8.4 Any information, confidential because of factors inherent within this code, *must not* be made available in the *edited* report. Only the *edited* report should be made available for external use.

(NB. Unless released by the witness, the witness's identity is confidential and *must not* be included in the *edited* report. To fully protect witnesses in sensitive occupations, it may be desirable to restrict details of the time, place and circumstances of the incident to such UFO investigators and researchers as 'need to know'.)

8.5 An investigator should not discuss his or her personal theories with a witness during the course of an investigation.

Declaration of the adoption of the Code of Practice for UFO Investigators.

To be completed by the investigator:

I, the undersigned, have read and understood the Code of Practice for UFO Investigators and state that :

1. I wish to be registered as a subscriber to the above Code of Practice;
2. I will conform to the clauses and principles of the Code of Practice when engaged in UFO investigations or research; and
3. I understand that I may be required to give account to the supervisory body (the National Investigations Committee for members of the British UFO Research Association) of any failure to conform to the Code of Practice for which I am responsible.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full name (block capitals please): _____

Address: _____

Accepted on behalf of BUFORA: (Name)

(Position)